

1. What constitutes a public meeting? What constitutes a quorum?

A public meeting is any hearing or other proceeding of your body, or gathering of, or communication by or to a quorum of your body to discuss or act upon any matter over which your body has authority. A quorum is when at least half of your voting members are present. Official action (votes) can't occur without a quorum present at your meetings. Board and commission members are cautioned against conducting business via email with a quorum of your members.

2. What is a regular meeting? What is a special meeting?

Your board, commission or committee should submit its regular meeting schedule for each calendar year to the Town Clerk's Office by January 31st of each year. For example, if your body regularly meets quarterly, your quarterly meeting dates should be filed as stated above.

Special meetings are those meetings not posted on your regular meeting schedule filed with the Town Clerk. Special meetings may be called up to

24 hours (excluding holidays and weekends) before the time set for your meeting.

3. Is an agenda required for every meeting? Where and when should it be posted? What if the meeting is cancelled?

Every public meeting that a board, committee, or commission has requires an agenda. Meeting agendas must be posted at least 24 hours (excluding holidays and weekends) in advance of the meeting. Agendas must be filed with the Town Clerk and posted on the Town's official website. If a meeting is cancelled, notice of the cancellation must be provided to the Town Clerk and posted on the Town's official website.

4. What needs to be included on an agenda?

Agendas should include: meeting time, date and location; matters that your body will discuss and/or take action upon; public hearings (if scheduled); executive sessions (if needed).

5. Can items be added to an agenda?

Items can be added to an agenda by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of your members present. This can occur at regular meetings only.

6. What are the requirements for filing minutes?

Draft meeting minutes for regular meetings should be submitted to the Town Clerk and posted on the Town's official website within 7 calendar days from which the meeting occurred. For special meetings, you have 7 business days to post the minutes. Adopted minutes should be submitted to the Town Clerk and posted on the Town's official website within 24 hours of the meeting (excluding holidays and weekends).

7. What is an Executive Session?

By a two-thirds vote of members present, your body may enter into an executive session. Executive sessions are closed to the public but may for example, at your body's request, include individuals needed to provide technical advice or testimony to your board. No action (votes) should be taken in executive session. Your

meeting minutes for the executive session should only reflect: the vote to enter into executive session; the time the executive session began, the people present at the executive session; the time the executive session concludes and the public meeting reconvenes.

8. What matters can be discussed in Executive Session?

Specific employees (please consult with the Town Manager's Office); strategy and negotiations regarding pending claims and litigation; security matters; real estate acquisitions (if openness might increase price); matters that would result in the disclosure of a public record that is exempted from disclosure requirements.

9. What is a public record and where should the records/files of our board or commission be stored?

Most records, files, and emails of your body are considered public record. Some public records may be exempt from disclosure pursuant to state statute. Questions regarding whether or not certain records are subject to disclosure can be directed

to the Town Clerk, Town Manager's Office, or Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission. All public records, whether or not they are subject to disclosure, should be maintained at Town Hall. Citizens seeking to inspect your records or requesting to receive hard copies of your records should be directed to the Town Clerk's Office.

10. What is the role of our staff person?

In most instances a staff person will be assigned to your body. Assignments are generally made based upon the staff member's professional expertise. Your staff person can generally assist with meeting agendas, minutes, research, technical advice, and other matters relevant to your body. Staff members are usually, but not always, non-voting members of your body.

Inquiries regarding these matters can be directed to the Town Manager's Office at 860-429-3336, the Town Clerk's Office at 860-429-3302, or the Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission at 1-866-374-3617.

October 20, 2009

Town of Mansfield

Freedom of Information Guidelines for Boards, Commissions, and Committees



www.mansfieldct.org